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Creative Translation¹

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Most of us will agree that one of the objectives to be aimed at in the study of a foreign language is an increased mastery over our mother tongue. It has been truly said that he who knows only his own language does not know his own language well.

The study of a foreign language will enhance our command of English in two ways: first, by reason of the inspirational value of the content of foreign literary works, and secondly, by reason of the comparative study of style. In this paper I shall confine myself to matters of style, and, in particular, I shall treat of style in connection with the process of translating from a foreign language into English.

The first question to be considered is this: How does the exercise of translating from a foreign language into English improve self-expression in the mother tongue?

One of the pitfalls of original English composition is the danger of literary insincerity. We are often tempted to say more than we mean, for the sake of achieving dramatic effect, and we sometimes prove recreant to our inspirations for the simple reason that a limited vocabulary, or stereotyped methods of self-expression, may cramp or distort the message that we wish to convey. This lack of objectivity is not easy for us to detect in our own writing, and all teachers of English are aware how difficult it is to remedy this fault in their pupils. It is precisely here that the practice of translation from a foreign language comes to our aid by giving us an objective task to accomplish. We know exactly what must be said, we know the tone in which it must be expressed, and if we fail to meet these specifications, we can see for ourselves the nature and the extent of the failure. The goal to be achieved is not only an objective one, but it is usually so difficult that its attainment will strain every nerve and sinew of our literary powers. To be true to the thought of the original, to reproduce emotional and connotative values, and to catch something of the personality of the author, is a task that calls for a command of English diction, structure, and idiom, that no other exercise will involve. The natural result of such discipline is an inevitable growth in the art of self-expression.

This is the function of translation as an aid to development in English, but this goal will be achieved only if our standard of translation is of a sufficiently high order. This brings me to the second and more important part of this discussion, i.e., the answer to the problem: "What qualities have we a right to expect

in a good translation?" In answer to this question I wish to propose the following requirement: The thought and the emotion of the foreign author should be faithfully reproduced in an English style which that author himself would conceivably have used had he been master of perfect English and had he been addressing himself to an audience of his countrymen who themselves were quite familiar with English. Such a style would avoid all the constructions and turns of expression peculiar to the foreign idiom, and, on the other hand, it would not hesitate to make use of all the resources of modern English, even though some of these characteristics of English differ widely from the usage of the original language. We would not only keep the personality of the author, but we would give that personality free play to express itself with all the exuberance of which the author would probably have availed himself had English been his native tongue. The foreign idiom would have no right of censorship. There is one thing, however, which would not be changed. We would not change the order in which thought follows thought in the original work, for such transposition would do violence to the coherence of the thought, and would render impossible a true reproduction of the author's personality.

Let us first discuss the use of idiomatic English and the avoidance of foreign modes of expression. I can best illustrate my point by considering some of the qualities which differentiate English from such a language as the Latin of Cicero.

An English-speaking Cicero would remain Cicero through and through, but he would make certain changes in his rhetorical art. He would replace many of his long, involved periods by short, crisp sentences, but he would weave these short sentences into the roll of his familiar rhythm. He would exult in the use of our large stock of colorful adjectives, instead of limiting himself to the drab assortment so characteristic of Latin prose; he would make free use of our ample supply of nouns, instead of making the verbs do most of the work as in Latin; and, above all, he would revel in the use of metaphor, yes, even of American metaphor.

If Cicero were writing and speaking English, he would not say, "People gladly associate with their equals." (*Pares cum paribus facillime congregantur.*) He would join us in saying: "Birds of a feather flock together." He would not say, "Glory is that on whose steps men seem to ascend into heaven." (*Gloriam esse cuius gradibus etiam in coelum homines viderentur ascendere.*) He would possibly declare: "Glory is the golden staircase that leads to the top of Olympus." In speaking of the bad conscience of criminals, he would not be content with: "Those who have sinned think

that punishment is always hovering before their eyes." (*Poenam semper ante oculos versari putant qui peccarint.*) He would symbolize this thought and say: "The noose forever dangles before the gangster's eyes," or, since the Romans did not hang refractory citizens, he might make some reference to the glint of the headsmen's sword. We must not, of course, put metaphors into the mouth of Cicero which are too patently anachronistic. On the other hand, we must not think that we are indulging in 'free translation' when we make him use in English a type of expression which Rome allowed to her poets, but withheld from her prose writers. In politics Cicero was conservative, but in the use of literary adornments he was definitely progressive. He limited himself, it is true, in the metaphorical use of nouns, but he certainly gave wings to his verbs, and had he written in English, he would undoubtedly have been more picturesque than most of his translators.

The second quality that I noted as characteristic of good translation is fidelity to the order of thought as found in the original work. By fidelity to the order of thought I mean that the ideas expressed by the separate phrases or breath groups should follow one another in the translation in the same sequence that was given to them in the original.² Such phrase-by-phrase rendition will not, of course, be confused with a cheap word-for-word translation. Many translators seem to think that the limitations of English syntax and sentence structure make it impossible to reproduce an author's ideas in the same order in which they entered the author's mind and flowed from his pen. Hence they freely transpose the thought order and build up a sequence of their own. It is quite true that fidelity to the original order is a severe requirement and will tax the resourcefulness of any translator. However, all creative work taxes the resourcefulness of the artist, and as I stated at the beginning of this paper, one purpose of translation is to tax our powers of expression and thereby develop them.

The desirability of retaining the original thought order may be explained as follows: Thoughts arise in the mind of the speaker or writer, not as separate entities, but as members of a sequence. The value of a thought unit depends upon its position in a sequence quite as much as on its own content. Each phrase in a sentence may be compared to an item on a carefully prepared menu. No one would think of transposing the courses at a banquet in order to facilitate service, and similarly one should not transpose the order of a piece of literature merely because it is difficult to find a way of expressing a thought in its proper place.

Secondly, the coherence of sentences within a paragraph depends vitally upon the contiguity of related elements as one goes from sentence to sentence. The initial idea in each new sentence should be related in some way to the main idea, or to the last idea, of the preceding sentence. This internal coherence of sentence with sentence, as found in the original, must be preserved in the translation if we wish the translation to be either smooth or intelligible.

Finally, the preservation of the original sequence is

very important if we are to do justice to the personality of the writer. There is perhaps nothing so characteristic of a man's style and personality as the sequence in which his thoughts come to him. This is particularly true in the expression of emotion. In this connection it may be interesting to recall that modern psychiatrists make an explicit study of a person's associative trends as a means of analyzing personality.

When we translate a piece of prose from a modern language into English, it is quite simple for us to preserve the original order of thought. It would often be difficult for us to do anything else. In the case of poetry it is quite different. In the poet's mind thoughts arise in an order suggested by his prevailing emotion, and if we disturb this order we may have a paraphrase, but we shall probably not have an artistic translation.

In regard to Latin authors, the translator is faced with a problem that will test both his ingenuity and his control over his mother tongue. In Latin the thought relationships are indicated by inflections and scarcely at all by word order. This does not mean that word order is unimportant. It is in fact extremely important, and it gives to Latin style a power of artistry that English can rarely achieve. Freed from the burden of indicating logical relationships, the word order of the Latin sentence is enabled to indicate emotional relationships which in poetry and in impassioned prose are scarcely less significant than logical connections. For instance, when Vergil describes the death of Lausus, he refers to the tunic which the youth's mother had woven for him: *Et tunicam molli mater quam neverat auro*: "The tunic that with loving skill his mother wove from threads of gold." Logically *molli* modifies *auro*, and this relationship is expressed by the inflection; but emotionally and artistically, the position of *molli* next to *mater* casts a warm glow over the line by suggesting that it was the gentle mother's love that made the golden strands so velvety. In other words, the epithet *molli* belongs to *mater* by virtue of its position no less truly than it belongs to *auro* by reason of its ending. In English, the restrictions of word order make it difficult if not impossible to assign double duty to a single epithet, yet the tyranny of syntax should not be allowed to deprive an idea of its emotional and often more important function. The difficulty may sometimes be obviated by the use of two expressions, as in the above example, where the emotional value of *molli* is explicitly rendered by the words "loving skill," while its literal and logical meaning is implicit in the phrase "threads of gold."

In attempting the type of translation advocated in this paper, we must first fill ourselves with the full inspiration of the author's message. We must allow the rhythm of the original style to sink into our souls, there to serve as a subconscious metronome for the tempo of our English sentences. Next we must forget all about the Latin syntax. Latin constructions must not be allowed to influence our translation. Lastly, we must ignore distinctions between parts of speech, for we may have to render by a noun the thought carried by a verb, and an adjective may need to change duties with a preposition. These changes will not be made

according to any pre-established technique. The pulsing vitality of the Latin thought must break through all mechanical barriers. We follow only one prescription, we keep the thought units in the original order. If the task is successfully accomplished, we should have a living reproduction of the thought, the emotions, and the personality, of the Latin author.

In conclusion and by way of illustration, I wish to present for consideration a phrase-by-phrase translation of the first two sentences of Cicero's speech for Milo. The work is admittedly a tour de force, in which fidelity to the original thought order is rigidly, perhaps not always happily, insisted upon.

Etsi vereor, iudices,
I am very much afraid, gentlemen of the jury,
ne turpe sit
that it may seriously hurt the prestige
pro fortissimo viro
of my valiant client
dicere incipientem
to begin my speech
timere,
with an air of uncertainty.

minimeque deceat
Diffidence here is especially out of place
cum T. Annius ipse
because in Titus Annius' own mind
magis de rei publicae salute
it is the welfare of Rome,
quam de sua
not his personal safety,
perturbetur,
that causes him anxiety.

me ad eius causam
Doubtless, I ought to embark on his case
parem animi magnitudinem adferre
with a greatness of soul equal to his;
non posse,
yet I find myself unable to do so,
tamen haec novi iudici
for this novel type of court,
nova forma,
this novel mode of procedure,
terret oculos,
simply bewilders me.

qui quocunque inciderunt,
Look, wherever I will,
consuetudinem fori
for some trace of the old familiar Forum,
et pristinum morem iudiciorum
for the time-honored pattern of conducting trials,
requirunt.
I am doomed to disappointment.

Non enim corona
Gone is the throng of citizens
consessus vester cinctus est, ut solebat,
that stood about the jury box in other days;
non usitata frequentia
gone is the familiar crowd
stipati sumus,
that once besieged the speaker's stand.

nec illa praesidia,
Instead, there are those soldier bands
quae pro templis omnibus cernitis,
posted before every Temple in full view.

etsi contra vim collocata sunt,
They are here, I know, to check disorders;
non adferunt tamen aliquid,
yet their presence casts a shadow
quo, ut in foro et in iudicio,
over the Forum at this trial,
quamquam praesidiis salutaribus
and so, in spite of this armed assurance,

et necessariis saepti sumus,
this all too necessary ring of steel,
tamen ne non timere quidem
I can hardly trust my fearlessness
sine aliquo timore possimus.
without some lurking sense of fear.

¹ Paper read at a meeting of the Michigan Academy of Science, Art, and Letters; Ann Arbor, Michigan; March, 1941.

² The classic work on this subject is Henri Weil's "Order of Words in the Ancient Languages," translated into English by Charles W. Super; Ginn and Co., 1887.

It is certainly good news to learn that Professor Lane Cooper's *Ten Greek Plays* has met with signal success. First issued in 1929, it has since been six times reprinted! No wonder that both author and publishers (The Oxford University Press: New York City) are now presenting us with a new and greatly enlarged edition, under the title *Fifteen Greek Plays*: Translated into English by Gilbert Murray, Benjamin Bickley Rogers, and Others. The Editor himself contributes an interesting Introduction, and a Supplement from Aristotle's *Poetics* and from Aristotle's (?) De Coislin Tract on Comedy. The volume contains four plays from Aeschylus (Prometheus Bound, Agamemnon, Coëphoroe, The Eumenides), four from Sophocles (Oedipus the King, Antigone, Oedipus at Colonus, Electra), four from Euripides (Electra, Iphigenia in Tauris, Medea, Hippolytus), and three from Aristophanes (The Clouds, The Birds, the Frogs). Apart from this rich assortment, we are especially pleased with two things: first, this beautifully printed volume comes in a very convenient format in spite of its 800 pages; secondly, the price of this "College Edition" is no more than \$3.00.

The large sale of *Ten Greek Plays* is in every way an encouraging sign. There are evidently many teachers of Greek in our midst who long to get away from their daily routine now and then and drink inspiration at the fountains of pure literature. We heartily recommend *Fifteen Greek Plays* to teachers of Latin as well. A splendid gift book, by the way, for graduating students.

"Straight Shooting in Latin Defense," by Raymond V. Schoder, S.J., published in the October and November issues, deserves more than a cursory reading. It is a well-reasoned and, in its way, complete argument for Latin. If we would defend Latin successfully, we must be ready to discard old and rusty weapons, and reach for the Damascus Blade. It is not enough to scratch and wound an opponent; it is necessary to kill once for all. "Straight Shooting" is, we think, a very successful attempt to think out anew the argument for Latin and establish it on the eternal grounds of human nature. In fact, a title like "The Study of Latin—a Practical Demand of Human Nature" would not at all be inappropriate. We learn that this paper is to be published in pamphlet form.

In defending Latin we may profitably heed an old sage proverbial saying: "Bis interimitur, qui suis armis perit."

(Publilius Syrus)

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Pax Vobis

Gloria in Excelsis Deo

et in Terra

Pax Hominibus Bonae Voluntatis

Pacem Relinquo Vobis: Pacem Meam Do Vobis

Iesu, Rex admirabilis
Et Triumphator nobilis,
Dulcedo ineffabilis,
Totus desiderabilis.

Quando cor nostrum visitas,
Tunc lucet ei veritas,
Mundi vilescit vanitas,
Et intus fervet caritas.

Iesu, Dulcedo cordium,
Fons vivus, Lumen mentium,
Excedens omne gaudium
Et omne desiderium.

Iesum omnes agnoscite,
Amorem eius poscite;
Iesum ardentem quaerite,
Quaerendo inardescite.

Te nostra, Iesu, vox sonet,
Nostri te mores expriment;
Te corda nostra diligant
Et nunc, et in perpetuum. Amen.¹

¹ St. Bernard's authorship of the *Iesu dulcis memoria*, of which the above is an extract, has in recent years been seriously doubted. See *Latin Hymns*, by Matthew Gerding, S.J., Loyola University Press, Chicago; 1920.

*Rex Pacificus magnificatus est, cuius vultum desiderat
universa terra.*

(Antiphona)

Editorial

After a long interval we are again able to give voice to Fr. Hugh P. O'Neill, whose stimulating views on the teaching of Latin are well remembered from earlier volumes of the CLASSICAL BULLETIN.

The function of translation from Latin to English as a regular class exercise is not always, we fear, duly appreciated. It is easy to see why some teachers should conceive it to be a 'bane' rather than a benefit to the young student.¹ Translation in class is a waste of time when it does not deepen his understanding of the Latin text. Positive harm results from the practice, too, when 'stiff, hasty, inelegant translations' are 'extorted' which tend to 'ruin and fossilize what English style the student once had.'² No teacher worth his salt should need to be told that slovenly, superficial, unidiomatic translations are a bane; or that translation is not the only way of testing a student's knowledge of a given text.

On the other hand, the need of translation at school is, as far as we know, widely recognized in this country. Where is the high school teacher, one would like to know, that dares throw translation overboard? We even venture to think that the mature scholar, who is familiar with the ancient way of thinking and the ancient mode of expression, is not infrequently compelled to attempt adequate translation—if only to look more deeply into the wealth of thought hidden in a Latin passage before him. Roughly speaking, all ancient compositions were intended to be read aloud with all the accompaniments of gesture, facial expression, and tone of voice. Of all this nothing is left to us but the words in themselves and their place in the sentence. The conscientious scholar knows this and is not satisfied until he has weighed the various chances of rival renderings. Any careful reader of, for instance, the *Loeb Classical Library* is more than once forced to try another way. And as for the 'advanced student,' with whom translation 'is not an indispensable means,'³ we beg to differ if we may rely on our own experience. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule.

Now, then, if translation must be continued at school, the question arises, How can it be turned into a blessing? Fr. O'Neill's paper provides one striking answer. Every teacher must decide for himself to what extent this rather exacting standard can be applied to any particular group of students. Two things are certain: translation is a waste of time and energy if it does not help the student to understand the Latin and to improve his use of English; secondly, to make translation a blessing instead of a bane, every step of even the youngest pupil in the art of translating must be gently but firmly directed toward the ideal goal.

¹ A. M. Zamara, S.J., THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN, Jan., 1943.

² Raymond V. Schoder, *Classical Weekly*, Oct. 4, 1943. ³ *Ibid.*

Anent the subject of Translation from Latin to English as a class exercise, an eminent classical teacher writes to us: "In view of the fact that all of our thinking is so intimately associated with words (and that

means words in our own language), I don't see how the subtle nuances and the 'feel' of a Latin phrase can possibly be conveyed except by paraphrase and translation in the only language which most of us command with any degree of adequacy, i.e., our own native tongue."

Caesar

BY EDWARD W. BODNAR, S.J.
St. Louis University

The great world crouches trembling and holds its ears, while block-busters crash round about and great shells whine through the air. The phenomenon of a globe at war has upset the everyday life of all men everywhere. It has revolutionized their taste, too. Take reading, for instance. The Saturnian reign of the escape novel, heretofore unquestioned, the empire of the love story, is tottering. Men are interested in war, now, in books that tell about campaigns, about heroes adrift in the broad Pacific. Men want literature that goes to the root of war and tells them why and how these things have happened, that exposes the intrigues of tyrants and the rise of political movements. War is the interest of the day. War is what men want most to read about, and yet—paradox of paradoxes—it is one of the great war-stories of all time that educators want to discard from the high-school curriculum.

Close to two thousand years ago one J. Caesar, political plotter extraordinary, led an army of big-thewed Romans up into mid-France.¹ His primary object was to build up a military power great enough to enable him to seize the Roman government. But in so doing he fought a series of military campaigns that preserved civilized Europe from the barbarian for several hundred years. Smart man that he was, too, he wrote his personal memoirs, which, published back in Rome, revealed him as one of the great generals of all time. Swiss, German, Belgian,—all met swift defeat at his hands when they began to threaten civilization, and he is one of the few invaders of all history who ever set firm feet on the soil of Britain.

Now, if Latin literature is discarded by panic-stricken educators, or relegated to some cobwebbed corner, what a shame it will be! For, besides cutting off all future generations from this treasure-house of culture, they will close forever the covers of a great story, a tale of strategy and valor and, on the whole, fair play. When war stories are at their peak of popularity, why must we proscribe this masterpiece? Boys would like it if they were made to realize that it is not just an exercise in parsing, but a real book about real men and real fighting, that its setting is right square in the middle of Hitler's European fortress, where once the tricolor waved, and that Caesar's was a fight against savagery and crude, cruel ideals, in defense of civilized man and his right to a higher life. Let the student only open the book: he will see how Providence, even in those days, made a crafty, self-seeking politician to serve its purpose in saving an ideal greater than himself, just

as it permitted the buccaneers and war-lords of the Middle Ages to turn back the Turks. He will learn to his surprise that the rules of the game of war were recognized at least in theory, if not always in practice, even by barbarian tribes. He will see that the Alsace-Lorraine question was dynamite even in those days, that 'Lebensraum' was the cry of invaders even then. He will chuckle when Caesar, bringing his cavalry to a parley with the German invader, makes his questionable Gallic allies get off their horses and puts his trusted legionaries (foot-soldiers!) in their place. He will roam through the battlefields of modern Europe with a brilliant general of the past, whose tactics are still being studied and used; and his eyes will open wide when he realizes that, essentially speaking, there is nothing new under the sun—nothing!

¹ A notable paper on "The Non-Political Nature of Caesar's Commentaries," by Norman J. DeWitt, has just been published in *TAPA*, Vol. lxxiii (1942), pp. 341-352.

We are always glad to hear someone put in 'a good word' for Caesar's Gallic War as a school text. We know that scholars differ sharply in their estimates not only of the Roman dictator but also of the use of his *Commentaries* for high-school pupils. "The attention given the Gallic War is far greater than it intrinsically deserves, and if Caesar himself were to return today, even his egotism would be shocked by the importance given his narrative in our schools."¹ The truth of this statement may be questioned. If Caesar returned today, would he not be better able now than he was at his own time to understand the full significance of his 'winning the West'? Whatever may have been his personal motives in subjugating Gaul, the fact is that his 'subjugation' brought the important province of Gaul under the civilizing influence of Rome. Had he not done so, it is idle to speculate how long Gaul would have lain under a barbarian rule. The fact is, Caesar won it for Rome and, eventually, for Christianity. Here is an 'intrinsic' merit in his narrative that cannot easily be set aside.

And if it is further maintained that the importance given to Caesar's narrative in our schools "is a distinction that is due, for the most part, to the simplicity of its thought and style," that, to our way of thinking, is another compelling reason for reading it with modern young Latinists. We have wondered, though, at times, why Caesar's Civil War is never mentioned as a possible rival to the Gallic in the classroom. His final defeat of Pompey was hardly less important to the world than his subjugation of Gaul, and as for thrilling narrative, there is no lack of that in his more personal struggle with a formidable enemy.

Apropos of this subject we call attention to a defense of Caesar's style, "Pure Well of Latin Undeified," by Professor W. H. Alexander, of the University of California, in *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. XII, No. 4, July, 1943. The writer's thesis is stated as follows:

I could easily defend the proposition that not only does Caesar have "style" but stands as one of the foremost of all

Latin stylists. But this is not what I set out to do; my intention was only to make good my assertion that nowhere better than in the Latinity of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* would one come to know what the Latin language could achieve with its own unaided powers. I shall not hope to convince anyone else simply by words of mine, but I should like to think that I may by now have persuaded some of my readers to get out their Caesars, possibly not disturbed since the days when they dog-eared them long ago, and enjoy in their years of discretion and maturity a draught from the pure well of Latin undefiled. I recommend the thrilling narrative of Book v from chapter 26 to the end of the book for a start; it will be hard on modern war-correspondents, many of whom probably claim a "style," but you will then see to good effect the Roman as he was and his language as it could be. Not a bad showing on both counts!

¹ See Eugene I. Burdock, in *Latin Literature in Translation*, by Kevin Guinagh and Alfred P. Dorjahn; Longmans, Green and Company; 1942; p. 200.

A Catalan Death Dance of the Fourteenth Century

BY CARL SELMER and VINCENT AITA
Hunter College of the City of New York

The present state of research on the origin and development of the Death Dance during the Middle Ages can be summarized as follows: (a) The legend of the Three Living and Three Dead (12th century); (b) the extensive *Vado mori* literature (13th and 14th centuries); (c) the dialogue literature of Body and Soul, and Man and Death (14th century); (d) the well-known Death Dances (15th and later centuries).¹ The strange association of song and dance, however, with so sinister a topic as death, has never been explained satisfactorily. The purpose of this article is to throw some light on the subject by offering words and music of a little-known Catalan Death Dance of the 14th century, which is preserved in the library of Montserrat, and constitutes the last item of the ten *Cants dels Romeus* or pilgrim songs of the *Llibre Vermell*.²

The text of the MS., in which the numerous ranks of society (*imperator, rex, dux, comes, papa, cardinalis, patriarcha, episcopus, abbas*, etc.) are indicated merely as a nucleus (*reges, clerici, potestates*), clearly antedates the *Vado mori* stage with its lengthy enumeration. A connection in form, however, is readily shown through the use of a refrain (*Vado mori: Ad mortem festinamus*). The Catalan text springs, no doubt, from the Christian thought of death, made more poignant by recurrent periods of plagues, famines, wars, etc. In the welter of death poetry and *contemptus mundi* literature, with the latter of which it is related by title and character, the most imposing poem of the Middle Ages is the *Dies Irae* by Thomas de Celano (d. 1255), friend and biographer of St. Francis. There is a striking similarity between the text of the *Dies Irae* and that of the Death Dance in form (rhymed triplets), in thought (last judgment, hell, heaven, etc.), and in phraseology (*Tuba cum sonuerit: Tuba mirum spargens sonum; iudex cum advenerit: quando iudex est venturus*; etc.), so much so that more than an incidental connection must be assumed. Indeed, the Death Dance seems to have been

modelled after an early version of the *Dies Irae*. There can be no doubt that the *Dies Irae*³ came into Spain at an early date through the medium of the Franciscans, who throughout the 13th century gave considerable impetus to close religious and cultural relations between Italy and Spain.⁴

In spite of the introductory line (*Scribere proposui*), the Catalan Death Dance was actually sung and danced.⁵ Montserrat, the famous place of pilgrimage of the Black Virgin in Catalonia, favored or even required the use of songs for the many processions and devotions of the pilgrims. It is quite in keeping with the purpose of a pilgrimage to devote some thought to death and the last judgment. Thus the Death Dance, probably composed by a local monk, was the last of a series of ten pilgrim songs—a proper finale, no doubt, to the pilgrimage.

The melody⁶ of the Death Dance appears in the MS. in the mensural notation of the *Ars Nova* Period of the 14th century: four lines, *brevis, semibrevis, and minima*. The form approaches that of the French *Chanson balladée* or its equivalent, the Italian *Ballata*. In keeping with this form, the melody, which alternates between the minor and major modes, is simple and syllabic in style. It is evident that the text was set to an extant melody of popular character, a common practice during the Middle Ages. The fusion of text and melody is not a happy one.⁷ The use of the same melody for the meter of the refrain (*Ad mortem festinamus*) and the text of the poem is responsible for faulty accentuation.⁸ While not attaining the solemn grandeur of the *Dies Irae*, the melody nevertheless possesses a lilt and verve fully in keeping with the tenor of the Death Dance.

(1)(4) Ad mor - tem fe - sti - na - mus, pec - ca - re de - si -
(3) Jam est ho - ra sur - ge - re a som - no mor - tis

sta - mus, - mus. (Fine) (2) Scri - be - re pro -
pra - vo, - vo. Ut de - gen - tes

po - su - i de con - temp - tu mun - da - no. (D.C.)
sae - cu - li non mul - cen - tur in va - no.

The text written on fol. 26r under the musical notes seems to have been written rather carelessly. The rhyme *Ad mortem festinamus* is occasionally misplaced. Moreover, there are numerous erasures and corrections, all of which indicate that the MS. is a copy. The chief variations of a 15th century copy (*ed. G. M. Dreves, op. cit.*, 101) are found in the footnotes (=M2).⁹

Ad mortem festinamus, |: peccare desistamus. :|
1 Scribere proposui de contemptu mundano,
Ut degentes saeculi non mulcentur in vano,
Iam est hora surgere |: a somno mortis pravo. :|
Ad mortem festinamus, |: peccare desistamus. :|*

*This refrain should be repeated after every three lines.

- 5 Vita brevis breviter in brevi finietur,
Mors venit velociter quae neminem veretur,
Omnia mors perimit |: et nulli miseretur. :|
- 9 Ni conversus fueris et sicut puer factus
Et vitam mutaveris in meliores actus,
Intrare non poteris |: regnum dei beatus. :|
- 13 Tuba cum sonuerit, dies erit extrema,
Et iudex advenerit, vocabit sempiterna
Electos in patria, |: praescitos ad inferna. :|
- 17 Quam felices fuerint, qui cum Christo regnabunt.
Facies ad faciem sic eum adspectabunt,
Sanctus, sanctus dominus |: sabaoth conclamabunt. :|
- 21 Et quam tristes fuerint, qui aeternae peribunt,
Poenae non deficient, non propter has obibunt
Heu, heu, heu, miserrimi, |: nunquam inde exibunt. :|
- 25 Cuncti reges saeculi et in mundo magnates
Adventant et clerici omnesque potestates,
Fiant velut parvuli, |: dimittant vanitates. :|
- 29 Heu, fratres carissimi, si digne contemplemus
Passionem Domini amare et si flemus,
Ut pupillam oculi |: servabit, ne peccemus. :|
- 33 Alma Virgo Virginum, in coelis coronata,
Apud tuum filium sis nobis advocata
Et post hoc exilium |: occurrens mediata. :|
- O mors, quam amara est memoria tua
- 38 Vile cadaver eris. Cur non peccare vereris?
Vile cadaver eris. Cur intumescere quaeris?
Vile cadaver eris. Ut quid pecuniam quaeris?
Vile cadaver eris. Quid vestes pomposas geris?
Vile cadaver eris. Ut quid honores quaeris?
Vile cadaver eris. Cur non poenitens confiteris?
Vile cadaver eris. Contra proximum non laeteris.

¹ Cf. H. Stegemeier, *The Dance of Death in Folksong* (Chicago, 1931), p. 28.

² For description of the text cf. D. Albareda, *Analecta Montserratensia* I (1917), 4; for facsimile cf. *ibid.*, 186; in the same volume D. G. M. Suñol (*Els Cants dels Romeus*, pp. 101-2) transcribes music and text, not, however, without serious mistakes and omissions (e.g. *coateptu*, *index*, *digue* for *contemptu*, *iudez*, *digne*, etc.); also cf. O. Ursprung, "Spanisch-Katalanische Liedkunst des 14. Jahrhunderts," *Ztschr. für Musikwissenschaft* IV (1921), 136 ff., whose faulty transcription of the text (*cum, miseri, ecclesiam* for *eum, miserrimi, et clerici*) is reproduced by F. Whyte, *The Dance of Death in Spain and Catalonia*. (Bryn Mawr Diss. 1931), 31. A 15th century copy of this MS., preserved in the same library and edited by G. M. Dreves, *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi* XXI (1895), 101 will be used for comparison (= M2 in the footnotes).

³ Although used for centuries in various dioceses, it was not until 1570 that the *Dies Irae* was prescribed in its present form for universal use by Pope Pius V. Cf. P. Wagner, *Einführung in die Greg. Melodien* I (Leipzig 1911), 274.

⁴ Such an influence was exerted not only through the personal visit of Thomas of Celano in Spain, but also through close contact between the Italian Franciscans and Montserrat.

⁵ Cf. the scribe's remarks in the MS. (fol. 22r): *Quia interdum peregrini*, etc.

⁶ G. M. Dreves, *op. cit.*, 220 gives a musical transcription of the 15th cent. MS., mentioned in n.2.

⁷ On the adaptation of new sequence texts to extant melodies, cf. P. Wagner, *op. cit.*, III, 486.

⁸ The editors, therefore, add an *Auftakt* (d) which the scribe may have omitted erroneously and which brings about a proper coincidence of accent in the melody and text.

⁹ 2 M2 *inano* 9 M2 *nisi* 11 erasure in front of *regnum*; *ad mortem* added as correction. 15 *ad mortem* inserted erroneously before *praescitos ad inferna* 18 M2 *ad facie*; in *adspectabunt* preposition not quite clear; M2 *spectabunt* 21 here fol. 27r begins 22 has ss.m² 23 in *miserrimi*, *mi* above line 27 *dimittant* 29 *karissimi* 34 *filium* ss.m² 34 *post* in front of *nobis* expunged, probably anticipating *post* of next line. 35 M2 *advocata* 37 Below this line an open coffin with a skeleton visible.

A Satirist's Philosophy

NORMAN J. DEWITT

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I should like to explain by way of preface that the term 'satirist' in the heading just above is not intended to suggest the acerbity that has been associated with satire since the time of Lucilius. It is intended rather to suggest the tone of the older and wiser Horace who urged his friend to smile when he philosophized. We should remember, too, that Horace called his satires *sermones*, a term which suggests something casual, something in the order of a chat between students, let us say, who share the happy belief that the by-ways along the road to learning are often as important as the destination.

Philosophy, to be sure, is a serious subject, but at times it is a little difficult to regard it without smiling. The *Parmenides* and *Sophist* of Plato are undoubtedly serious works; it is plain that their author was working out definitions and distinctions that were vital to his philosophical system, but it is well not to be too solemn when we find in the notes statements such as these (couched in the unmistakable clarity of the Platonic idiom): "Can we state precisely what what not being is not is?" or "If what being is is, is not being being?" All of which, of course, arises out of Parmenides' simple admonition that not being is not. This is very sensible, because it ought to be plain even to a child prodigy that if not being is, we might as well forget about being and drift on down to the gymnasium to watch the boys having their morning work-out with the discus.

The student who professes the doctrine of *nil admirari* will also be able to adopt a somewhat less than solemn attitude toward the philosophical excursions that take their departure from the new physics and *quantum* mechanics. Back in the days when education meant the study of the Classics and no monkey-business about it, the universe moved along serenely in its course according to the laws of Newton's mechanical universe. There was nothing the matter with matter. The universe was made of little pieces of stuff called molecules and atoms. These little pieces could not be seen, but they were there all right, and saved the phenomena very nicely. Light was what lit things up; it was made of rays or beams which always went in a straight line and were reflected or refracted at various seemly angles.

Even the theory of evolution was a form of progressive certainty. As applied to society, it suggested gradual progress toward a better state which was to be achieved in the Tennysonian manner by lopping the moulder'd branch away (instead of chopping the whole tree down right now). But the theory of evolution is not what it used to be. Experiments with generations of ephemeral creatures such as fruit flies have shown that new types may be created, not by adaptation or by the survival of the fittest, but by chance: that is, by the impact of an *x* or a *y* or some other algebraic ray from outer space upon a cell. Shocks of this sort have a confusing effect upon the cells that govern heredity, and the embryo, instead of growing into the

form of life that its parents have a right to expect, turns out to be a sport, like the traditional preacher's son.

The elements of chance and unpredictability have likewise been introduced into the physical sciences. As Professor Einstein predicted, and subsequent observations proved, light rays do not necessarily go straight, but on occasions break their parole, so to speak, and go around corners (for what we are not informed). Another discovery is that light can behave in a most uncertain fashion, acting sometimes like a stream of solid particles, at other times like a series of waves. Needless to say, we can hardly be expected to have the same respect for light that our grandfathers had.

Along about the same time that Einstein showed light up for what it really was, the Cambridge physicists and their successors went to work and busted the atom (and along with it our faith in the finality of scientific pronouncements). The atom, as its Greek name indicates, was supposed to be the final indivisible particle. But Rutherford and his associates showed that the atom was made up of all sorts of tiny entities whizzing around in their little orbits. Since then the scientists have had a fine time bombarding the atom and shooting the helium (or stuffings) out of it. The atom, when squarely hit, gives off positrons, neutrons, protons, ambipons, deuterons, tritons, pemptions, and all sorts of peculiar objects derived from the back of the Greek grammar. This is very confusing to the layman.

What makes it worse for the casual observer is that out of all this confusion there emerges more confusion. What looks like certainty in the realm of *quantum* mechanics is not certainty at all. The behavior of the electron follows Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy; that is, you can tell where an electron is, or how fast it is going, but not both at the same time, like the national debt. Further investigation reveals that the electron is a wave motion in the continuum. The continuum, it seems, is an assumption made to explain things that otherwise could not be explained. A wave motion is a travelling bulge in something, like a wave on the surface of a lake. Thus, since the universe is made up of electrical units which are wave motions in an assumption called the continuum, it is plain that the universe is, after all, just a lot of bulges in an assumption.

Sir James Jeans, who is not only a physicist but a philosopher, has put it this way: the universe is the nominative case of the verb 'to undulate.' The student of the Classics, who has been left out of the excitement of this brave new world, may derive a low form of pleasure from this assertion. All that modern science has demonstrated, in spite of the atom-busters, is that the universe is a case form of a verb, that is, a part of speech. And it is interesting to note that much the same conclusion was reached in ancient times. Heraclitus observed that the universe was an infinite state of flux. This was as much as to say that the universe was the nominative case of the verb 'to flow.' Parmenides used a different infinitive. He came to the conclusion that the universe was simply the verb 'to be.'

"Only being is," said Parmenides. It was pretty hard to get ahead of those old Greeks. When you get right down to it, Heraclitus' and Parmenides' conclusion as to the ultimate nature of things, namely that the universe is a part of speech, a verb, is about as satisfactory as anything suggested since their day. (We might add that if the universe is just a verb, it is certainly one with an irregular past and a doubtful future.)

Here it will be in order to recall that while we have smiled at philosophy, we have not denied anywhere that it is a serious subject. For it is implicit in these comments that there is a difference between being serious and being solemn. To be solemn is to take one's self too seriously; the Horatian philosophy which is here professed warns us against any such excess. And that, of course, suggests a final word on the Doctrine of the Mean. This admirable philosophy is itself not to be taken too seriously, for moderation in all things logically involves moderation in moderation. Thus Horace, in spite of his protestations of temperance, was not unwilling to toss flowers about and to celebrate in the manner of some of the less inhibited Thracians when a suitable occasion presented itself.

Comments on the Horatian philosophy seldom stress the fact that there is no such thing as absolute moderation, that the philosophy based upon moderation is one of infinite extension. For the principle "nothing to excess" is reflexive, so to speak; it must be applied to itself. And when it is applied to itself, the extended principle thus formed in turn applies to itself, so that we might state the principle this way: Nothing to excess to excess to excess. . . . War-time paper restrictions naturally prevent us from setting forth the principle in its entirety; we may smile quietly in the Horatian manner and let it go at that.

Catholic Classical Association of Greater New York

The regular meeting of the Association, the first of the academic year 1943-44, was held at the Ursuline Academy, 1032 Grand Concourse, New York City, September 25, with the President, Mother Antonia, O.S.U., presiding.

Father McCaffery of Cardinal Hayes Memorial High School was appointed Chairman of the Committee on Awards, to succeed Bro. Albert Paul, F.S.C.

The highlight of the meeting was a learned and enlightening address by Rev. Dr. Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., of the Fordham Graduate School, on "The Contribution of Classical Antiquity to the Foundations of the Middle Ages."

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